



Environmental Best Practice

LESS MESS

LESS MESS AND THE FAT TRAP

PROJECT AIM

To raise awareness of fat and grease issues with the sewers and provide a clean, convenient and easy to use alternative to irresponsible disposal. To promote responsible disposal of waste.

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

We have created a national sewer awareness campaign. Less Mess has highlighted major problems and gained support from all water/waste companies in the UK to promote responsible waste disposal.

WHY DID WE DO IT?

I am a housewife and mum of two young children. My partner and I created the Fat Trap after blocking my sink as a result of pouring away fat and grease while cooking the family meal. This blockage spurred me on to investigate the frequency of the problem and any issues that may be occurring. We found the problem to be widespread and potentially threatening to the environment.

Every year people pour thousands of gallons of waste oil, fat and grease down their sinks, unaware of the problems it can cause both for themselves and the environment. Such waste can block up the drainage system inside the home, causing sewerage and waste back-ups that can result in expensive callout fees and repair bills for the homeowner.

Blockages in the main sewerage system can cause overflows into the rivers and seas, thus polluting our waterways with sewerage and giving the water companies hours of expensive work removing the solidified fat before this happens. Also with septic tanks, even a tiny amount of oil, fat or grease can affect the bacteria that make a septic tank work, causing major and very costly problems. It is actually illegal to pour anything in the sewer than may disrupt the free flow of the sewerage system.

WHAT DID THE PROJECT INVOLVE?

The Fat Trap holds 500ml and sits neatly beside the cooker and will take the waste fat, great and oil from every day cooking, frying and roasting. The Fat Trap has a $\frac{3}{4}$ screw cap for easy opening and sealing and an internal funnel to encourage slow pouring for less spillage. The Fat Trap helps to keep your system clean and the environment clean by disposing of your waste oil, fat and grease simply and safely.

We then developed the Fat Trap to use as a tool to drive a campaign to raise awareness of fat and grease-related issue within the sewers and to provide a user-friendly alternative to pouring down the sink. This process took a long time and cost in excess of £15,000 of our own money.

I knew that to make a difference, I would need to get the whole country involved, so I contacted the water companies across the UK and went to many meetings with them to discuss the problems and try to make use of their big company reputations and marketing budgets. After months of hard work, Yorkshire Water was the first to come on board. The company purchased 20,000 Fat Traps and gave them away to customers



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as part of a major awareness campaign. They then provided my contact details for repeat purchases, a move that has helped to recover my costs.

I continued to promote the campaign and the Fat Trap full time at home, getting any companies that might be useful to the campaign, such as septic tank companies, butchers and garden centres, to join.

Over the next two years every water company in the UK has followed Yorkshire Water's lead and I have had extensive press and magazine coverage. The Fat Trap has even appeared on BBC2's *No Waste Like Home* programme and featured in Channel 4's *The F Word* with Gordon Ramsey.

WHO AND WHAT BENEFITED?

The project has raised awareness and highlighted all sewer-related issues, including the problems caused by catering outlets, and taught the country about alternative ways to deal with waste at home and be resourceful.

Water companies have benefited from the reduction in costs of jetting the sewers and if everybody keeps up the good work, there will be fewer sewerage overflows into our seas and rivers. The Fat Trap and the campaign has been very innovative as, up to now, there never had been any product for the disposal of fat and grease at home.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM THE PROJECT AND ARE YOU PLANNING ANY FURTHER DEVELOPMENT?

I have learnt many aspects of business during this time and that perseverance of something you believe in does work. Also, I have learnt that the general public do care and wants to make a difference to our world but they need educating and needs it to be made easy for them. We will continue the Fat Trap campaign and are extending the campaign to Europe. Further afield, Canada has also shown an interest.

I am now developing our new product, The Oilbin, which will collect waste oil from deep fat fryers. We hope to create a nationwide campaign to get the public to collect this waste – typically three litres per fryers – and either arrange collection or get them to take their waste to a waste management centre, where we will have bio diesel companies set up to take the oil and make it into fuel. Once again I am trying to use the big companies to move this campaign and I am in talks with many of the leading deep fat fryer and bio diesel companies.

We are also in the process of adding another page to our website that will focus on water efficiency and water saving ideas. ♦

